

Message Text

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P R 120957Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1606

INFO AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMCONSUL LUANDA

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, ZA

SUBJECT: MAJOR PROJECT: ZAMBIAN RAILROAD DEVELOPMENT

REF: STATE 098101 (NOTAL); LUSAKA 0080; BLANTYRE 0073

1. TEM PUBLISHED IN "ENGINEERING NEWS RECORD" APPARENTLY WAS BASED ON STATEMENT MADE IN PARLIAMENT MARCH 10 BY MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, POWER AND WORKS MULENGA THAT GRZ IS LOOKING FOR ENGINEERING CONSULTANT FIRMS TO UNDERTAKE FEASIBILITY STUDIES FOR RAIL LINKS TO ANGOLA AND MALAWI.

2. MULENGA REMARK WAS EVIDENTLY FOLLOW-UP TO ANNOUNCEMENT MADE BY PRESIDENT KAUNDA DURING STATE DINNER HELD JAN 12 FOR VISITING MALAWI PRESIDENT BANDA THAT ZAMBIA WOULD SURVEY POSSIBILITIES OF A RAIL LINK WITH MALAWI AS WELL AS ANGOLA (LUSAKA 0080). MALAWIANS HAVE FOR SOME TIME PERIODICALLY SOUGHT STIMULATE ZAMBIAN INTEREST IN SUCH LINK. ON THIS OCCASION, BANDA REPLIED MALAWI ALREADY HAD TAKEN DECISION TO BUILD A RAIL LIO FROM BARAKA TO MCHINJI THROUGH SALIMA AND LILONGWE TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN THREE YEARS. UNLIKE PROPOSED ZAMBIAN LINK TO MALAWI, FINANCING FOR MALAWI PORTION HAS BEEN SECURED (BLANTYRE 0073).

3. RATIONAL FOR ANGOLA LINK IS (A) ELIMINATE NECESSITY TRANSPORT COPPER TO LOBITO VIA ZAIRE WHICH IS COSTLY IN TERMS OF TIME, LOST REVENUE TO ZAMBIA RAILWAYS AND ECONOMIC
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DEPENDENCE ON ZAIRE, AND (B) FOSTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF

WESTERN AND NORTHWESTERN PROVINCES. PLANS, AS DESCRIBED IN PRESS AND INFORMALLY BY GRZ OFFICIALS, ARE TO CONSTRUCT A NEW LINE FROM PRESENT END OF RAIL IN CHINGOLA THROUGH NORTHWESTERN PROVINCE TO CONNECT WITH BENGUELA RR IN ANGOLA. FEASIBILITY OF THIS ROUTE CONTINGENT IN PART ON GRZ DECISION TO CONSTRUCT IRON AND STEEL PLANT WEST OF SOLWEZI. AGRICULTURAL AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT OF AREA ALSO CITED AS POSSIBLE JUSTIFICATION.

4. DURING RECENT RAILROAD EQUIPMENT TRADE MISSION, BRIEFING BY GRZ OFFICIALS ON ZAMBIAN RAIL DEVELOPMENT PLANS MADE ONLY PASSING REFERENCE TO ANGOLA LINK AS A DESIRABLE AREA OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT. THEY ALSO NOTED PRESIDENT KAUNDA'S DECISION TO STUDY MALAWI LINK, IMPLYING SOME COMMITMENT TO CARRY OUT FEASIBILITY STUDY. TOP RAIL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES REMAIN (A) UPGRADING OF EQUIPMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF EXISTING RAGW FACILITIES (LUSAKA 1997, 9/30/74) AND (B) COMPLETION OF TAZARA.

5. WE NOTE THAT MINISTRY OF POWER, TRANSPORT AND WORKS HAS TOTAL 1975 BUDGET ALLOCATION OF ONLY K50,000 FOR "GENERAL SURVEYS AND INVESTIGATIONS". IT DOES NOT APPEAR THEREFORE THAT FUNDS HAVE BEEN BUDGETED SPECIFICALLY FOR RAILWAY FEASIBILITY STUDIES.

6. THESE RAIL PLANS ARE LONG-RANGE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH DEPEND ON ZAMBIA'S ASSESSMENT IN THE FUTURE OF ITS VULNERABILITY AS A LANDLOCKED COUNTRY. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RHODESIA, MOZAMBIQUE AND ANGOLA AND THE SUCCESS OF TAZARA WILL INFLUENCE SIGNIFICANTLY ZAMBIA'S PERCEPTION OF ITS NEED FOR ADDITIONAL OUTLETS FOR ITS TRADE.

7. GOVT OFFICIALS CONCERNED WITH RAIL DEVELOPMENT PLANS ARE UNAWARE OF ANY FORMAL CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR FEASIBILITY STUDIES. INFORMALLY, THEY STATE THAT THE MULENGA STATEMENT IN PARLIAMENT WAS A POLITICALLY NECESSARY FOLLOW-UP TO THE BANDA VISIT.

8. OUR SOUNDINGS SUGGEST THAT NO FORMAL STEPS HAVE YET BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TAKEN TO CARRY OUT SURVEYS. WOULD SEEM BEST FOR INTERNATIONAL ENGINEERING CO. TO WRITE DIRECTLY TO MINISTER MULENGA AND MAKE ITS INTEREST A MATTER OF RECORD.
NELSON

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